

University of Dundee

Citizen Science Projects (MOOC) 3.11

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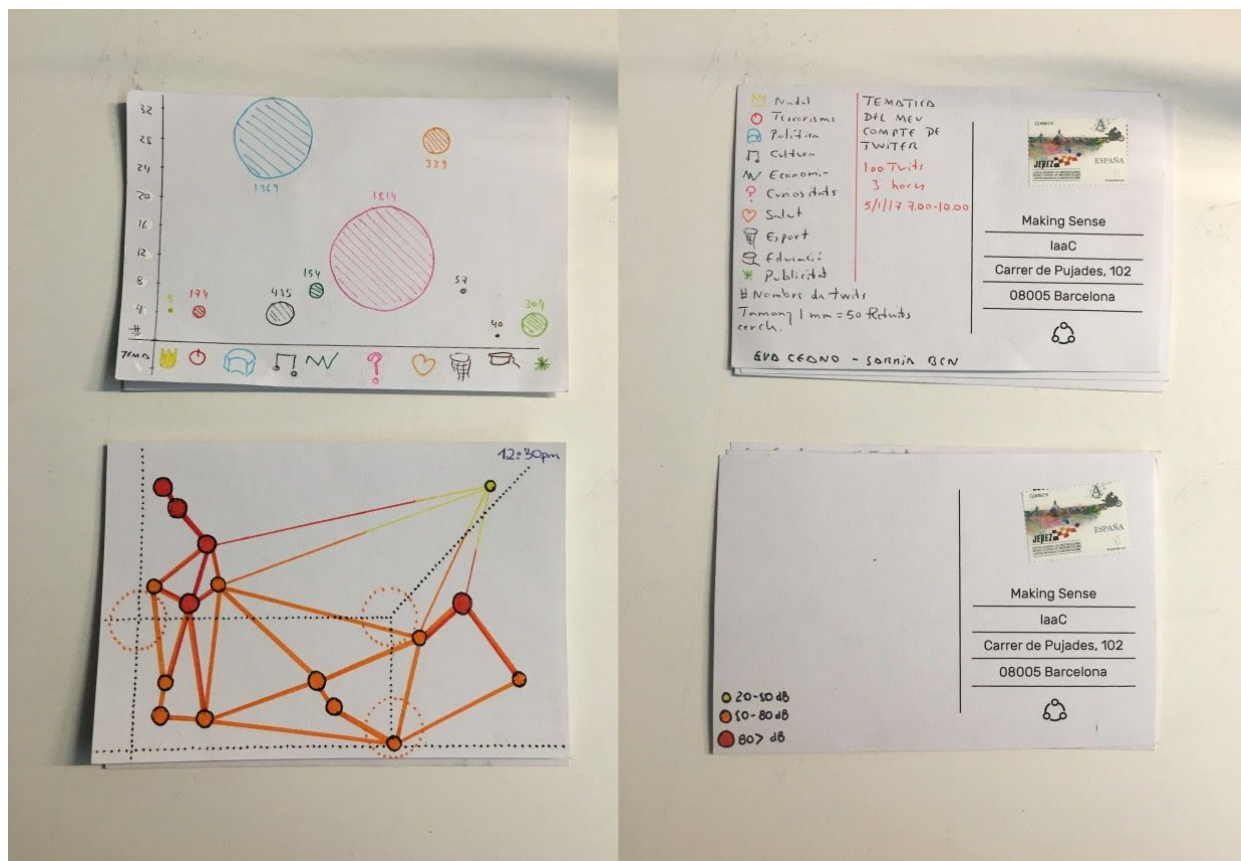
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Tool in focus: Data Postcards

##Why is it helpful?

Sometimes you might want to keep track of a variety of data for your own use and enjoyment or share them with people you know and other learners in this course. Some data art projects involve only two people and their own data, such as the [Dear Data](<http://www.dear-data.com/theproject/>) project, which was designed by two friends, one based in the UK and one based in the US. Each week for a year, the friends collected and measured a particular type of data about their lives, used these data to make a drawing on a postcard, and then exchanged postcards through the mail. The postcards are now part of a 300-page book.

The artist and data journalist [Mona Chalabi](<https://monachalabi.com/projects/data-visualisation/>) has also created many data visualisations using resources, such as national governmental statistics and data collected and published by NGOs and research institutions. She has recently been publishing many

hand-drawn infographics on COVID-19 to help awareness and individual responses to the pandemic.

These are just two examples which can inspire you to think artistically about data, and show the importance of the Data Postcards tool.

##Description

The [Data Postcard tool](<https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/publications/data-postcards-tool>) is a creative way for you to visualise and share the data from a citizen science project. It can illustrate something simple, like the amount of times you walk through an area with high air pollution over the course of a week, or the kinds and amounts of animals you have observed in a prescribed area.

Do this every week with a different challenge related to your citizen science project.

##Key Question

How can you visualise the data in your daily life?

##Time needed

As you decide.

##Who should be included?

Data postcards are best shared with others. Try to find someone who you can send your postcard to and vice versa.

##Resources needed

Data Postcard (you can download a free template [here](<https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/publications/data-postcards-tool>)), markers, pens, and coloured pencils.

##How to prepare?

Each week think about what data you are collecting as part of your citizen science project. Take a note of the measurements or observation each day, or as needed, this will help when it comes to illustrating your data postcard. Print the data postcard provided or use a blank A5 card.

##Steps:

1. Collect your data on something that happened or something you observed during your citizen science project. Have this to one side while you create your postcard.
2. On the address side of the [postcard](<https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/publications/data-postcards-tool>) draw or write your data key. This can help your recipient understand the data visualisation you are sending.
3. On the other side of the postcard draw or visualise the information you have been collecting.
4. Send your postcard to someone else who is involved in your citizen science project, and have one (or more) of your collaborators send a postcard to you.
5. Enjoy and reflect on the experience!

Data postcards have been used in the Dear Data project and applied to citizen science during the Making Sense project.

##Further Reading

Lupi, G & Posavec, S. (2016). Dear Data. Particular Books: London. ISBN:1846149061.

Woods, M., Coulson, S., & Ajates, R. (2020). Data Postcards Tool. University of Dundee.
<https://doi.org/10.20933/100001181>

##Let us know your thoughts!

Have you tried this activity out? If so, please let us know how it went and what you learned. Do you have any tips for others who want to use this tool?

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